

ANNEX B

Guide to Studying and Passing Exams

The purpose of this study guide is to twofold. The first purpose is to help you understand and learn the lesson material. The second purpose is to show you a method of passing exams, and ultimately, the course. Learning is one thing; however, passing an examination is another.

Before I address the "how to" aspects of studying, let me talk to you first about how to attack the objective. In this case, the objective is learning, passing the exam, and then passing the course. Getting ready to study is a twofold exercise. You must first consider the problem of time management and next, the problem of where to study. Managing your time is of key importance when you start to look at trying to get ready for a course like this. **You will also have to have a computer with Internet access and a printer to print lesson material. It is very hard to read off of the monitor. Refer to Annex E for download instructions.**

Many NCOs think that a correspondence course is an easy exercise. Let me assure you that taking a correspondence course can be more difficult than attending a resident course. One reason it is more difficult is this: there is less structure to a correspondence course than there is to a resident course. The design of the course forces you to plan your time to meet all of the course requirements. In a correspondence course, you must set up your own structure. Failure to do this will ensure that you will have a much more difficult time learning, passing exams, and passing the course. Plan your time! You will never have enough time to do everything you want to do, so utilize what you have to your best advantage. Look at your weekly schedule to see what time you have available. At a minimum, I would recommend that you try to set aside at least an hour a day just for study; if possible, schedule at least six to eight hours per week. Set this time apart strictly for study and don't let anything else interfere with it. Prepare yourself mentally for this study time and tell those around you what you are doing so they won't bother you.

After you have set up this time, you need to consider the problem of where to study. Try and find somewhere quiet--away from distractions like telephones, televisions, radios, and the kids. This is your time, so make the most of it. Find a place with adequate lighting, a good sturdy chair, and a desk on which to spread things out. If you are lucky enough to have the room, make

this a permanent place to study. At the very least, try and find a place where you can set books and papers aside without having to worry about finding them the next day. If you aren't fortunate enough to have this kind of area in your home, invest in a briefcase to store your study material, and go to your nearest library. In essence find somewhere quiet where you can study and where no one will bother you. Don't attempt to study while doing something else; like watching television, eating, or talking. Good study is an all encompassing effort that is thought intensive. Concentration is key to good thought processes.

Looking at the problem of how to study, I have broken this problem into four related steps. They are:

1. Reading/Approaching the lesson.
2. Taking notes.
3. Preparing for exams.
4. Taking exams.

You should perform each of these four steps in order. First, let's look at how to read/approach the lesson. It may have been a while since you have read anything on this level or subject. Don't think that because you have been around a number of years in this profession that you are a master of all trades. The lessons you will be receiving go beyond a common base of knowledge; then they build and refine on that base. Before you even start to read the lesson, get a couple of sharp pencils, a colored highlighter, and a good dictionary. Your supply room should be able to provide these to you, but if they can't, any department store can satisfy this need. The first thing to look at is the front section of the lesson where the terminal learning objective (TLO) and the enabling learning objectives (ELOs) are listed. The (TLO) is the lesson objective--what you should know or be able to do when you finish the lesson. The ELOs are those tasks that you must learn in order to perform or know the TLO. It will help you to highlight the TLO/ELOs since you will be referring back to these items throughout the lesson. Make sure you understand the TLO/ELOs. If you don't understand them, then look up what you don't understand in your dictionary, or call the Sergeants Major Academy and talk to your class Facilitator. The TLO/ELOs are more than just the central point of the lesson: they are the source of the test questions for the exam for that lesson.

When you read the lesson and perform the exercises, don't read the whole lesson at one time. Break the lesson up by chapter or section, and read only that one chapter or section at a time. When you read it the first time, read to gain a sense of what the author

is talking about. As you go through the chapter and find something that doesn't make sense or that you question, make a note in the margin. Read the chapter again. This time, read it slowly looking for information that addresses or answers the TLO/ELOs. Highlight this information when you find it. Return to the front where the TLO/ELOs are and record the page number of this information. Go through the entire lesson in this fashion and take your time. This method may seem slow, but it will pay off as you begin to study for the examination.

I have already suggested making notes in the lesson/textbook in the margin when you have a question. Additionally, as you finish each chapter, stop for a minute and think about what you have just read and learned. Record your thoughts on the chapter on a separate sheet of paper (I recommend spiral notebooks as a method of taking and recording chapter notes). Keep these chapter notes and try to reduce the notes covering the important points in the chapter so you can fit all these notes on one to two written pages. There are many ways to take these notes, you can write them in bullet comments, or you can write them in an outline manner. Whatever way you choose to take notes, make sure that they are clear, to the point, and written in your own words.

If you have correctly followed each step discussed above, you should be able to take the exam. As you begin to study, I recommend you do the following. First, review the TLO/ELOs; know what they are and what they ask for. Second, review the lesson. You won't have to read the entire lesson if you have highlighted the important points, made careful pencil notes, and answered all of your questions. Third, review your chapter notes. Fourth, review the self-graded and faculty-graded exams. This information will help, but, by itself, will not allow you to pass the proctored exam. Remember the objective here is to make sure that you know the TLO/ELOs since the exam questions will come from them.

Additionally, there is a Bulletin Board site for students to go and ask question from other students. Be careful what you are asking. This site is to exchange ideas not answers.

Now you should be ready to take the exam. If you have studied properly, you should have no problem taking the exam. Let me give you some helpful hints before you go see your test control officer (TCO). Taking an exam is like taking an enemy objective: not only do you have to know your enemy, you must also prepare yourself mentally to attack. If you want to successfully take an enemy position, you do not go out the night before and party. Think smart, and get a good night's sleep before you take the exam.

Think positive, don't let anything else intrude on your thoughts before you take the exam. Arrive at the test site with one thing on your mind: taking and passing the exam. Don't try to cram the night before, but get a good night's sleep so you can think clearly

the day you take the exam. Arrange to study for the exam over a period of days rather than trying to do it all in one night. If possible, try to take your exam in the morning, rather than in the afternoon. The longer you get into a day, the less logically and clearly you will think and reason. If possible, avoid taking an exam right after lunch. The largest hurdle you will face in studying is starting.

